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Blacksburg Country Club to pay \$19,000 over spill, fish kill

Blacksburg Country Club will also complete six riverbank restoration projects.

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Blacksburg Country Club has agreed to pay nearly \$19,000, in addition to financing an environmental restoration project, to make amends for a chemical spill that killed thousands of fish.

The agreement reached in federal court is the latest regulatory action to come from a 2007 accident that dumped herbicides into the North Fork of the Roanoke River, killing about 10,000 fish.

Combined with an earlier state enforcement action, the incident will wind up costing the country club more than \$60,000.

In July 2007, a club employee was mixing three herbicides with water to treat the golf course when he briefly walked away from a 150-gallon sprayer that was being filled with a water hose.

When he returned, he found the water and chemicals had overflowed onto a concrete pad. In an effort to clean up the mess, workers sprayed the equipment and concrete pad down with water, unaware that a drainage pipe was dumping the mixture directly into the river.

Within days, an estimated 10,335 fish were dead on a 1.4-mile stretch of the river.

As part of a consent decree recently entered in U.S. District Court in Roanoke, the country club agreed to pay \$18,964 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

It also agreed to complete six riverbank restoration projects along the river.

The court action was taken to address the approximately 170 Roanoke logperch — a federally endangered species — that perished in the spill.

Earlier, as part of a state enforcement order, the country club agreed to pay about \$10,000 to the Department of Environmental Quality. A second fine of \$25,740 was satisfied by the country club after making improvements to its pesticide storage areas and other changes at a cost of about \$32,000.

Tom Duetsch, general manager of the country club, said there's been a good working relationship with state and federal regulators on the riverbed restoration.

"The nice thing about this is we're doing restoration work within our own boundaries," Duetsch said. "It was work that needed to be done anyway, and it's a benefit to the environment, so it's a win-win situation."

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